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Corrections and clarifications

A story on Oct. 29, 1999, titled "Saudi money aiding bin Laden," contained several errors. The report, attributed to interviews with unnamed intelligence sources, stated that the Saudi royal family ordered an audit of Saudi Arabia's National Commercial Bank and its founder and former chairman, Khalid bin Mahfouz. A spokesman for Mahfouz has denied that the royal family ever ordered such an audit, and the bank has denied that any such audit was conducted. USA TODAY has not been able to locate any record of such an audit and has no reason to believe that one was conducted, though other, routine audits may have occurred.

The report also suggested that as a result of the audit, Mahfouz had been placed under "house arrest" while hospitalized. Representatives of Mahfouz have stated that while Mahfouz was hospitalized for health reasons at the time of the article, he was not under house arrest, and USA TODAY has no reason to believe that he was.

The article also incorrectly noted that Mohammad Hussein al-Amoudi had succeeded Mahfouz as chairman of National Commercial Bank. In fact, Mahfouz's successor was Abdullah Bahamdan. As to the article's statement that Amoudi headed Capitol Trust Bank, representatives of Amoudi have asserted that he never served as chairman of Capitol Trust Bank.

As well, USA TODAY attributed to intelligence officials claims that Saudi money transfers to Islamic charities financed terrorism by Osama bin Laden, including the attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The role of certain charities continues to be a subject of litigation and federal investigation, but the assertions about the attempted Mubarak assassination appear to have originated with a widely cited report in the newsletter *Africa Confidential*. The newsletter subsequently retracted its claims and apologized in court for having made them. Representatives of Mahfouz believe the article may be read to suggest that Mahfouz was among those who allegedly paid "protection money" to bin Laden to stave off attacks on their businesses. USA TODAY disagrees with that assertion; in any event, no such implication was intended.

The story was written by Jack Kelley, a reporter who was found recently to have fabricated several high-profile stories. In this case, the story's assertions had

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been widely reported and subsequently retracted by others.

Find this article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/2004-04-12-correction_x.htm

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